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ABSTRACT

Helping to build a bridge between classroom lessons and the world outside the classroom door, this book suggests specific strategies for using the newspaper across the school curriculum. The introduction to the book answers the question: Why use newspapers in the reading curriculum? Chapters in the book are entitled: (1) Teaching How to Read the Newspaper; (2) Reading with Skill and Comprehension; (3) Integrating Writing and the Language Arts; (4) Reading in Social Studies and Science; and (5) Reading and Mathematics. (RS)

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Third Edition

Teaching Reading Skills through the Newspaper

Arnold B. Cheyney

Professor Emeritus
University of Miami
Coral Gables, Florida

International Reading Association
Newark, Delaware 19714

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FOREWORD

Welcome your students to the real world, the world outside the schoolyard gates. Introduce them to the newspaper—the textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, state/provincial, national, and world affairs; the most current analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision-making; the latest in music, theater, television, and the fine arts; and even columns and comics to make them laugh.

Newspapers are among the most relevant texts available for the classroom. Students like them because they always can find something they care about inside the newspaper's pages. Newspapers are also user-friendly and empowering.

Today's newspapers use design elements—story placement, typeface, graphics—to make information easily accessible to the reader. Important stories usually are placed at the top of a page. The most important stories have large bold headlines. Graphics appear next to related stories.

The text format also presents information in a predictable way. In a straight news story, the headline gives the reader the main idea of the story. The lead paragraph gives a summary of the story in capsule form, answering the important

newspaper questions – who, what, when, where, why, and how. The remainder of the news story provides additional details, with the least important information at the end of the story. Opinion pieces such as editorials and columns present an issue, supply facts, and then give the writer's opinions and recommendations.

Newspaper activities empower students by giving them control over their own learning. Students make choices about the content of their lessons. They select the environmental issues to investigate for science class. They select the government leader to study. They select the articles that show the Constitution at work. The teacher chooses the skill, process, or topic, but the students determine the reading material. When students are given these choices, they cannot fail. Using the newspaper becomes a positive and successful experience.

Newspapers teach relevance in a subtle way. Whether students are writing a character sketch of a local artist, computing the cost of groceries for the week, or learning about pollution, the unmistakable message is there: this is *why* we learn to read, this is *why* we learn to compute numbers, this is *why* we learn about scientific processes – this is the real world.

Arnold Cheyney helps teachers build the bridge between classroom lessons and the world outside the classroom door by suggesting specific strategies for using the newspaper across the school curriculum. This book and a newspaper will provide teachers with enough materials to challenge and excite students for hours.

Sherrye Dee Garrett
Lancaster Newspapers, Inc.
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Why Use Newspapers in the Reading Curriculum?

Why newspapers?

Because they are what adults read most often. People do read books, but in day-to-day life, newspapers make up the bulk of the average high school graduate's reading. Magazines and then books follow in second and third place. (For details on these facts and the statistics that follow, see *91 Facts about Newspapers: A Statistical Summary of the Newspaper Business by the American Newspaper Publishers Association.*)

- **Fact:** On an average weekday, more than 113 million adults in the United States, or 62 percent of the total adult population, read a daily newspaper.
- **Fact:** More than 121 million, or 67 percent, read a Sunday newspaper.
- **Fact:** Each copy of the more than 62 million U.S. daily newspapers sold each weekday is read by an average of just over two people.

- **Fact:** The average reader spends 62 minutes reading the Sunday newspaper and 45 minutes reading one or more daily newspapers.

Why newspapers?

Because teachers can get excellent supplementary teaching aids from their local newspaper by contacting the newspaper's Educational Services Department.

- **Fact:** Almost 700 North American newspapers conduct Newspaper in Education (NIE) programs; approximately 400 sponsor literacy programs.
- **Fact:** Newspaper in Education Week is observed in schools in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, as well as in Canada and more than 10 other nations.
- **Fact:** Daily newspapers are published in 1,500 U.S. cities, and 93 of these have two or more newspapers.

The American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) Foundation publishes *Bibliography: NIE Publications*, a regularly updated guide that lists more than 300 teacher manuals and curriculum materials related to the use of newspapers in the classroom. The ANPA Foundation also publishes *The Newspaper As an Effective Teaching Tool*, a brief introduction to the NIE idea. (Both of these inexpensive publications are available directly from the ANPA Foundation, The Newspaper Center, Box 17407, Dulles Airport, Washington, DC 20041, USA. For information on prices or ordering, write to this address or telephone 703-648-1000.)

Why newspapers?

Because newspapers have a built-in capacity to motivate readers. When students read, they search for the material's relevance to their lives. When given a choice, they are more likely to want

to read the material in the newspaper that describes their school's football or basketball team than the assignment on amoebae in their science text. Poor readers are more apt to carry newspapers—and read them—than textbooks written at their reading level. Students are motivated to find out about events in the world and how they might be affected by what's going on.

Why newspapers?

Because you can introduce your students to the skills of critical thinking, retaining information, and transferring learning to the realities of day-to-day living by using the newspaper as a teaching tool. Through the use of the daily newspaper, students can learn to *read*, *write*, *speak*, *listen*, *think*, *interpret*, and *reason*.

Why newspapers?

Because research (see *Educators: Try Me* and *The Newspaper As an Effective Teaching Tool*, both from the ANPA Foundation) indicates that students who study the newspaper in school:

- have greater knowledge of current events;
- are more politically aware;
- know more about the world at large;
- have positive attitudes toward school;
- improve their reading skills and attitudes (as measured by standardized tests); and
- improve in behavior, motivation, and verbal interaction.

So, why use newspapers in reading?

Because they work!

Chapter
ONE

Teaching How to Read the Newspaper

There are many ways to present the daily newspaper to your students, but remember that setting goals is of primary importance. Students must come to written words with some indication of what they are going to get from them. The newspaper helps in this quest by presenting information in interesting ways that stimulate readers to read on and encourage them in their desire to know.

Teachers can effectively use the built-in organizational and design features in the newspaper—headlines, pictures, graphics, and so on—in conjunction with their own strategies—advance organizers, analogies, previews, vocabulary instruction, or questions. All this means is that lessons, however simple or complex, must be structured so that students start reading the newspaper with a goal in mind. Preferably, the goal will be their own.

All of the strategies described in this chapter follow this basic format: When students read the newspaper they will (1) set goals for reading, (2) read, (3)

relate their past knowledge to the article, (4) think critically about what they have read, (5) form new concepts and understandings from their reading, and (6) set *new* reading goals. This strategy outline is designed to be ongoing so that students' knowledge of current events will grow steadily. The specific strategies described in what follows can be incorporated into this general schema. Students can be told about this basic format so that eventually they will become instinctively aware of the pattern to follow when tackling the newspaper.

Circle of Knowledge

There are three phases in this strategy:

1. posing questions about a newspaper article before the students read it;
2. discussing the questions with the whole class after reading; and
3. activities for summing up.

First, the teacher should select an appropriate newspaper article, one that is right for the grade and skill levels of the students and is likely to interest them. Next, the teacher prepares some questions for the class based on the content of the article. These questions should be broad and general but grounded in the experiences or prior knowledge of the students; if, for example, the article is about civil rights violations in another country, the prereading questions might be linked to the civil rights movement in the students' own country. After the questions are asked, students read the article, jotting down their answers as they do so. They can then use these notes for reference during the group discussion that follows.

For example, say a news article about a coup attempt to overturn a legitimate foreign government prompted these questions:

1. Under what circumstances would it be possible for a coup to happen in this country?
2. How would the citizens, the military, or the current government of this country react to such an attempt?
3. Can you think of any situation in which you would favor a coup in our country?

If the teacher believes that students will have difficulty with the complexity of such questions, they can be allowed to share their thoughts with one another in groups of two or three prior to reading. After a few moments, have the students – individually or still in small groups – read the article.

The postreading whole-class discussion can then take many forms. The students' responses to these questions may lead to a debate about types of government or an exploration of democratic processes. Follow-up work can include assignments of related reading or suggested essay topics (a few activities of this nature will be outlined later).

Reading for Meaning

With this strategy, the teacher poses three questions:

1. **What does the newspaper article say?** This question requires an exact, factual answer. This is the mastery phase – the question leads students to master the article's content.
2. **What does it mean?** This question asks the student to interpret and make an educated guess about the information contained in the article. It is the understanding phase.
3. **What does it mean to me?** This question gets at the heart of what reading is all about. It asks students to apply the information they've read to their own specific experience or situation. This is the synthesis phase.

These three questions can be asked about any written material found in the newspaper: stories, feature articles, sports reports, editorials, letters to the editor, even editorial cartoons. (In fact, they also work well with much of the material frequently found in content area textbooks.) Remind students to direct their reading toward a purpose by putting these questions on a chart in the classroom.

Compare and Contrast

The compare-and-contrast strategy is a three-phase plan that helps students with reading comprehension by teaching them how to organize, critique, and remember information they read in the newspaper.

To understand this information, students establish criteria on which to assess it.

For example, newspapers frequently discuss "hot" topics in their editorial pages and letters to the editor, as well as in articles and features. The teacher can identify an issue that is important to students – say, trying to determine which candidate would be better for a particular office – and assign some newspaper reading based on this issue. Students are told that they will have to discuss their views and decide which candidate deserves to win in the upcoming election.

To discuss this issue intelligently, participants need to agree on criteria. A visual organizer can be displayed, listing the agreed-upon criteria to be used for making judgments. An example follows.

Compare and Contrast: Visual Organizer

Issue: Who is the better candidate – Sarah Yee or Juan Perez?

Criteria	Differences	Similarities
Intellectual Ability		
Political Views		
Past Experience		

In the comparison phase, the students identify the differences and similarities between the two candidates using the criteria they have set and taking their information from the newspaper pieces. The teacher or a student can enter these on the visual organizer as the students make personal organizers at their seats.

In the application phase, the students can use prior knowledge to add to their personal organizers any information they have learned from other sources. At this point, they evaluate the material, come to a conclusion, and express their opinion – perhaps in an essay, a debate, a TV commentary to be read aloud, or in any of the other ways suggested in activities described later in this book.

Synectics

Synectics uses metaphors or the language of imagination to come to grips with the problem of understanding what is going on in the world. Choose a newspaper article for the class to read – say, about a prison where the inmates are holding some guards hostage. Have the students read the article on their own, and then divide the class into small groups for discussion. Next ask the students to write their own versions of what is described in the news story. Then students can go to the chalkboard and write down powerful words that they used in their descriptions.

At this point direct analogies are made. If the word written on the chalkboard is *prison*, an analogy might be "A school classroom is like a prison." Encourage other metaphors that use words such as *hostage* and *knife*.

In the second phase, personal analogy, the students "personalize" these powerful words by trying to view themselves as the objects they describe or suggest. If, for example, one student chooses *hostage* for a personal analogy, he or she could be encouraged to describe the events in the newspaper story from the hostage's point of view.

In the third phase, identifying compressed conflicts, the students develop new analogies, such as "A hostage is a prisoner caught in the confines of the school." Making analogies of what they have read increases students' ability to create imagery, which in turn benefits their writing and speaking. When they encounter new information of the same type they have read, they will have an intensified perception of the material.

Cubing

Cubing is a technique for exploring the meaning found in news articles and feature stories. It consists of six terms (one for each side of a cube) that can be used as a springboard to question material read in the newspaper.

One way to use the technique is to assign each student one of the terms and ask him or her to base a question for the article on that term. Here are the terms and some examples of the questions that could be developed from them:

- **Description:** What is the nature of the problem in this article? How large is the problem? Can you describe it in your own words?
- **Comparison:** Is the problem presented in this article similar to other problems or situations you are familiar with? How is it the same? How is it different?
- **Association:** When you think of the problem in this article, what first comes to your mind?
- **Analysis:** What is your opinion on the extent of this problem in our area of the country?
- **Application:** How could you apply what you learned from this article to your own life?
- **Argumentation:** What position do you take on this article? Are you for or against how it was handled? Why?

An alternative approach is to have each student read an article and respond to it in writing, using these six terms as a framework.

Double Entry

This technique can be used in any setting where material is being read, seen, or heard. It is useful for developing critical reading and thinking skills.

Assign the students a newspaper article to read. Instruct them to make notes on what the article is about on the right side of a sheet of paper as they read. These notes will list the main ideas of the article, perhaps the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why) and how, fragments or phrases from the article, or any specific information that the students deem important.

When they have finished, they scan their notes and react to them in writing on the left side of the same page. Here they can summarize, comment, do freewriting, develop metaphors, or even make up a poem about what they have noted on the right side.

On the next page is a short example of a double entry based on a news article about one of the problems of parking on city streets.

Headline: Downtown Parking Takes a 20 Cent Jump

Second Step: Reaction	First Step: Notes
I don't think that parking fees should be raised. Let's call a strike and meet at city hall.	Parking fees for meters go from 5 cents an hour to 25 cents.
Who cares if the city does need money. I'm a citizen, too.	Fees will generate revenue for financially strapped city.
Parking Meter Haiku If I have to pay More money to park downtown, I'll move to the moon.	"I don't mind paying an extra 20 cents," said Barbara May.

Directed Teaching Lesson

In the traditional directed teaching lesson the teacher talks with the students about the ideas they will find in a particular article of the newspaper. (This assumes the teacher has read the article prior to having the students read it.) Second, the teacher prepares the students for reading by directly teaching the vocabulary in the article that might give them difficulty. The third step is motivation. Here the teacher might prepare questions to be answered, discuss what experiences the students might already have had related to the article, or assign an interesting activity to do at the conclusion of the article. Last, the students read the article silently, complete the assignment, discuss the significance of what they have read, or take a quiz on the article's vocabulary or content.

Note: For more information regarding Circle of Knowledge, Reading for Meaning, Compare and Contrast, and Synectics, contact the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314, USA. Videotapes of these four strategies are also available from ASCD.

Chapter
TWO

Reading with Skill and Comprehension

Vocabulary

The acquisition of vocabulary is of great importance in learning to read. If a person doesn't understand the meaning of the words he or she reads, then the skills of decoding, making inferences, understanding story structure, and so on are of little use. Clearly, new vocabulary is not learned in isolation from reading skills; acquisition of vocabulary, however, continues even after other skills have been mastered. The following activities focus on using the daily newspaper to teach new vocabulary, but they should also lead to increased reading competence.

The alphabet

The 26 letters of the alphabet we use in English are the key to opening the door to reading and the world of books and print. In the primary grades, many teachers designate certain days as "letter days." For instance, if a day is designated as *Y* day, students might be encouraged to name things in the classroom that begin with the letter *Y*:

yardstick, *yarn*, *yellow paper*, and so on. Older students could use the newspaper in a similar way, perhaps simply to find and learn words containing specific letters.

Once students are comfortable with reading for meaning they can try the following game. The teacher names a topic that fits with the curriculum—say, space, sports, or math. Students are then asked to read the newspaper (either random articles from an entire issue or articles that have been selected in advance by the teacher) and try to find one word that relates to the topic for each letter of the alphabet. If the topic is sports, for example, students might find *archery*, *baseball*, *cricket*, and so on through the alphabet. Students should share what they find with the rest of the class, and if a student has picked a difficult or unfamiliar word, he or she should be asked to define it. If a word for a particular letter can't be found, students should try to come up with one, either in discussion or from another source.

Crossword puzzles

Crossword puzzles have obvious value for developing vocabulary. Newspaper crossword puzzles are often difficult, but a teacher may find that, together, the students can fill in five or six items each day. Class time can be set aside to check answers in the next day's newspaper.

Most newspaper crossword puzzles will be much too complex for students in the earliest elementary grades. This does not mean, however, that they can't be used with these young children. Teachers can use the clues in crossword puzzles as a springboard for teaching about synonyms and definitions. They can read each clue aloud (perhaps only once, to help develop listening skills) and ask the children to come up with a response. To become more comfortable with words and word games, students can use crossword puzzles during art time, making designs in the checkerboard patterns or filling in particular boxes in particular colors.

Scavenger hunt

As an introduction to the newspaper, or just as a rainy day activity, try a newspaper scavenger hunt. Make a list of 10 or 20 words you want teams of students to find in one day's issue. (Check to make sure the words you choose are in that edition.) The words can be chosen to emphasize anything you might be teaching at that moment – reading skills (words with the same consonant clusters or vowel sounds), language arts skills (words chosen for their prefixes, suffixes, parts of speech, or alliteration), or content area material (mathematical or geographical terminology, for instance). When students find the items, they can circle or cut them out. The team that finds and can define all the words on the list wins. The ideal situation, particularly in the earliest elementary grades, is for every team to be a winner.

Classifying

This skill is extremely important to daily life. The newspaper is a useful tool for explaining how things can be classified. Start by pointing out how the newspaper is divided into sections, and ask students to list the subgroups found in each section. Then show how the newspaper classifies people by their occupations: for example, baseball players, television personalities, or politicians. Have students cut out all the words naming animals from one day's edition and classify them as pets, zoo or wild animals, or farm animals. Classify the pictures by location or content. Challenge students to find something from a particular category – perhaps an amphibious animal or a mode of transportation. These activities can lead to a discussion of how classifying helps in our daily lives.

Matching

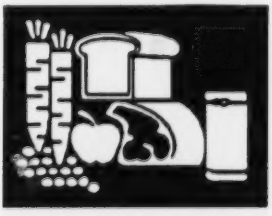
This activity is based on the game "Concentration." Cut out identical pairs of letters, numbers, words, or pictures from two

copies of the same day's newspaper. Paste each item on an index card. Mix the cards and spread them out, face down, in a large rectangle. Each child or team tries to make a match by turning over two cards at a time. If the cards match, the child or team keeps those cards; if they don't, the cards are turned back over and the next child or team takes a turn. The individual or team with the most pairs when the "board" is cleared is the winner.

Matching helps develop reading readiness in young children by teaching them to recognize similarities and differences in the patterns of letters and words. For older children the game can be modified to enhance vocabulary acquisition: if the matched cards are pictures, the child must identify the picture prior to removing the pair from the board; if the cards depict a word, the child can be asked to provide a definition or use the word in a sentence.

Foods

Clip pictures of food from the newspaper, along with matching food words. Paste the words on one set of cards and the corresponding pictures on another set. Ask students to match words and pictures. Later, when a large number of cards have been accumulated, have children classify each of them into one of the basic food groups (thereby reinforcing classification techniques learned earlier). Students can also be asked to read about the foods in encyclopedias and locate on a map where they are grown. Target certain vocabulary terms by having children find pictures of foods used to make sandwiches, for example, or of foods found in the school cafeteria.



Difficult words

Choose a column or article from the newspaper that contains vocabulary you think will challenge your students. Ask students to read the piece and write down the words that are difficult for them. Have them try to determine the meanings of these words by working together to use context clues. Then ask them to find the words in the dictionary and write out the correct definitions. Students can also find synonyms for the words and decide if any of them would be appropriate in their sentences. To help them remember new vocabulary, younger students can cut difficult words out of the newspaper and paste them into scrapbooks for later reference.

Denotations and connotations

Choose words from the newspaper, write them on a bulletin board, and discuss the various implications of their meanings. For example, *yellow* is a color between orange and green on the spectrum. In colloquial use, however, "He is yellow" indicates cowardice. The teacher should write words in sentences that illustrate both denotation and connotation and explain how newspapers often use a word's different nuances to make a point.

Function words

Words such as *above*, *behind*, *low*, *top*, *near*, *between*, and *up* are best learned initially by linking the physical action with the printed word. Ask the children to roll up tightly several sheets of newspaper in the form of a stick. Have the children place the newspaper above their heads, behind their backs, low to the floor, on top of a desk, and so on.

The students can then try to find the words in the newspaper. They also can use the prepositions to describe the location of different newspaper features in relation to one another (for instance, placement of photos in relation to captions or story).

Question and answer

Students of all ages enjoy finding clues to answer questions or to solve riddles. The newspaper is full of information that can be used to devise question-and-answer games. After reading the front page, a student could make up this one:

Question Find a word meaning to announce.
Answer Herald.

Or a student might describe a cartoon character:

Question This character is around five years old.

The student continues to describe the character until a classmate is able to guess who it is.

Word ladders

To help students develop visual discrimination, have them construct word ladders. Start the word ladder by selecting a word from the newspaper and printing it on the chalkboard.

Say the word is *investigator*; the first student would then have to find a word in the newspaper that began with *r*, the last letter of the word chosen. The student then adds the second word to the chalkboard. That word creates the rung for the next word. Eventually the ladder should look something like this:

investigato*r*
|
*r*id*e*
|
*e*v*e*n
|
*n*ew*s*
|
*s*ubmarin*e*

Continue adding words until there are at least ten. Then encourage children to make their own ladders. Ask them to define any unfamiliar words in their ladders by using the dictionary.

Time words

The newspaper is full of words denoting time. Ask students to cut time words from the newspaper and mount them on 3″ × 5″ cards. Then have them arrange the cards in chronological order. This activity will help students master such things as the order of the days of the week and the months of the year.

Comprehension

Vocabulary development is an ongoing process, but basic strategies for understanding text can be mastered in a finite period. The newspaper, with its varying types of writing, can be a useful tool to promote students' comprehension. Here are a few specific activities that can help.

Sequencing

Sequencing can be taught by having students cut apart the frames of a cartoon strip, mix them, and then rearrange them in correct order. A more challenging task is to have students cut newspaper articles apart by paragraphs, mix these, and then arrange the parts in sequence. This activity can be done individually by students or in pairs if particular attention needs to be paid to analyzing the article. After the students have the article in what they feel is the proper sequence, give them a copy of the original. The students may find differences, but will learn that changing the sequence does not necessarily change the meaning of the article. In fact, the articles are sometimes improved by the students' reordering—a good lesson on why writers should revise their writing.

Drawing conclusions

Students need to learn strategies for weighing evidence and getting at the truth of written passages before forming conclusions. First, they need to determine the premise of an article or editorial: What does the author want readers to believe? Second, readers need to decide on a sentence-by-sentence basis whether they are reading fact or opinion. Have them underline fact sentences in green and opinion sentences in red. Next have students ask themselves whether the facts related support the author's position and whether any pertinent facts have been left out. Finally, based on the evidence given, students should determine whether readers ought to be persuaded to adopt the author's conclusion.

To help younger students learn to draw conclusions from text, pose a variety of questions. Lower level questions center on recall or memorization of data previously learned: Who did...? What led to...? What are...? Tell me in your own words how.... Upper levels focus on analysis and evaluation of data: Why did you enjoy...? What other ending is possible? Why was it wrong (or right) when he did...? Based on our value system, what should they do? Using these questions as a start, help students determine answers to questions relating to text or maybe to their favorite cartoons. Then have them create their own questions. Finally, determine which question are lower level (recall) and which are higher level (analysis).

Cause and effect

Cause-and-effect relationships are prominent in newspapers. For example, one article might relate that a violent storm dumped tons of snow on roads (cause) and that schools are closed (effect). Ask students to find newspaper articles detailing issues such as pollution, inflation, and crime—cause-and-effect situations that touch them personally. Students can review editorial cartoons for simplified presentations of dilemmas and possible resolutions.

Inferring

Learning to draw inferences is of great importance in developing comprehension and critical reading skills. Ask younger students to choose pictures from newspaper advertising supplements. The pictures should depict scenes such as a family eating soup for lunch, or a teenager washing the kitchen floor. Have the rest of the class analyze the implied messages delivered in the ads: that families should eat together, or that teenagers should help with keeping the kitchen clean. Children also can guess what type of product is being advertised. Older students can read newspaper headlines and draw inferences about the nature of the article that follows. After exercises of this sort, the skill of inferring is more easily understood and applied.

Reading aloud

The newspaper contains much material that young students can read to develop oral expression. The advertisements and comics are especially useful for developing this skill. Have each student find five exclamations and five questions from the newspaper. Model examples of change of pitch and phrasing for them so they can hear how to read these sentences expressively.

Older children might enjoy the following read-aloud activity. Divide the class into four groups and assign each group to one of four categories of news: local, regional, national, and international. Each day have the groups prepare short oral readings of the most important stories in their categories. (Have the class determine the criteria for selecting the best stories.) At the end of the week, a panel discussion by each group can highlight the most important stories. Have a Friday "Week in Review" at which students read aloud what they consider the best of the sports stories, comics, features, or book and movie reviews. Or students can present the week's highlights in the form of a TV news broadcast.

Chapter
THREE

Integrating Writing and the Language Arts

In the past, the language arts were broken down into four separate skills areas, each of which required individual attention: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Further distinctions were made between receptive skills (listening and reading) and expressive skills (speaking and writing). Recently, however, educators have come to approach the language arts in a more holistic way. Such movements as whole language and the process approach to writing indicate an increased awareness of the many connections among listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

This chapter focuses on activities that teachers can use with students throughout the elementary grades to hone writing skills. These activities reflect the newly recognized interdependence of language arts skills. Writing is not an activity to be pursued in isolation from any other skill area. The newspaper, with its many different styles of writing, can be used in a variety of ways to help improve students' facility with all aspects of the language arts.

Getting Ready to Write

In order to be successful and enthusiastic writers, students in the early elementary grades must learn about the techniques that writers use. The following activities are for this "getting-ready" stage and are intended to help show children that using language effectively is not only challenging, but fun.

Print

Newspapers can help students become comfortable with print. Young children can cut apart the large letters found in headlines and re-form them into their own names. These letters also can be used to create greeting and thank you cards, to develop captions for bulletin boards, or to send notes and letters to classmates. Cut out uppercase letters and paste them next to the same letters in lowercase form. Show children how words are made by pasting letters together.

Spelling

If you assign weekly spelling words from a textbook, ask your students to find the words in the newspaper and circle them. This activity can be conducted as a game when the words are first assigned. Give students ten minutes to find as many as they can. This will familiarize your students with seeing the words used in "real" print, rather than reproduced in isolation in their spellers.

Affixes

Knowing the meaning of prefixes and suffixes can help when a reader is trying to understand an unfamiliar word. Encourage students to learn the meanings of common prefixes (un-, bi-, dis-, multi-) and common suffixes (-ment, -ous, -tion). It is helpful to make a chart of common affixes with their meanings

so that students have an easy source of reference. Encourage students to find words containing affixes in the newspaper and to notice just how many there are. They then can try to determine the words' meanings without using the dictionary. Have the students practice making new words by adding affixes to common root words.

Compound words

Compound words often develop in three stages – from two words to a hyphenated word to one word (base ball, base-ball, baseball). Ask your students to find ten compound words in the newspaper. Then separate the compounds into two words and write the words in two separate columns. The students can make up other compound words by matching words from one column with words from the other. A dictionary check is vital to determine if they have actually created bona fide words.

Contractions

The newspaper can also help in reviewing the use of contractions. First, define contractions and why they are used. Make sure to explain the difference between contractions and possessives. Then ask students to locate and circle ten different contractions in the newspaper. Have the students rewrite the contractions in both their "contracted" form and as the full words they abbreviate. Then encourage students to write sentences or a page of dialogue using all the contractions they find.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Newspapers are full of acronyms and abbreviations used to conserve space. Some very common words are actually acronyms. Sometimes initials are used to abbreviate a string of words, and the initials become as common as the words they represent (USA, FBI, and UNESCO, for example). Ask your stu-

dents to find acronyms and words abbreviated by their initials in the newspaper and write them in original sentences.

Parts of speech

Children are usually eager to read the weekend comics. One excellent way to review parts of speech is to circle or underline examples found in the newspaper comics. Use different colored pencils or crayons for each part of speech, beginning with common and proper nouns and then moving to more difficult concepts. Ask your students to put words from each speech category on flash cards and then arrange the cards to create sentences. Use the dictionary to reinforce the lesson that words can sometimes represent more than one part of speech.

Pronoun referents

Pronoun referents abound on the comic pages of the newspaper. To teach this grammatical concept, direct students to underline the pronouns in selected cartoons. Have the students write above the pronouns the antecedents to which the pronouns refer. The students can exchange cartoons and check one another's answers. They can then rewrite the cartoons using the antecedents.

Changing tense or person

The newspaper is an excellent source of practice material for students who are learning to use tense and person correctly in their writing. Have students rewrite sentences from the newspaper in different tenses. For example, if a cartoon character says, "My legs tremble," students could write, "My legs trembled." Search through various stories for verbs and label the tense of each verb found. If material is written in the first person singular, students can change the pronouns to third person singular and note the corresponding change in verb form.

Punctuation

Students need meaningful practice with using punctuation. Assign students the task of finding and circling examples of punctuation marks in the newspaper when specific punctuation concepts are studied (capitals, periods, question marks, and so forth). When students see the way punctuation is used to make reading the newspaper easier, they will be more likely to learn how to punctuate correctly in their own writing.

The comics are a good place for students to practice using quotation marks. Have them choose their favorite comic strip and write out the words in story form. For example, if the words "Stop, thief!" appear in a balloon over a character's head, the student might write:

> Hagar looked up from his dinner and saw his dog running off with a steak. Hagar jumped to his feet and shouted, "Stop, thief!" He then chased the dog up a tree, shook his fist, and called, "See if I ever feed you table scraps again."

Students may find that they have to correct the grammar and punctuation of some cartoons when they rewrite them in this form – an added learning opportunity.

Mistakes, typos, and style

Anyone who has material in print realizes that occasionally slip-ups occur in spelling or grammar, and that typographical errors sometimes elude even the most careful proofreaders. Since newspaper articles must often be produced quickly, they are likely to suffer from such problems. Students enjoy finding these mistakes and typographical errors. Have students find as many mistakes in the newspaper as they can during a five-minute period. Older students can be asked to examine when apparent "mistakes" are really inserted on purpose for reasons of style. Cartoon characters, for example, sometimes speak incorrectly because the author is trying to achieve a certain effect.

Listening

Too often children are *told* to listen but are not taught *how* to listen. Conducting short listening practice sessions each day can pay dividends in the development of listening skills while helping children tune in to language. Read headlines from the newspaper aloud—but backwards. For example, you might read, "Coast east the hits hurricane." When finished, ask the children to write the headline's words in the proper order. Choose short headlines at first and gradually build up to longer ones to challenge students as they become more proficient. This will be easier for them as they become more aware of the parts of speech and the order in which they appear in headlines.

Similes and metaphors

Feature or human interest stories are likely to contain similes and metaphors. First, give a simple lesson on these two figures of speech, explaining how writers use them even in the realistic, informational writing of newspapers. Then have students find examples for class discussion and study. Finally, ask students to create their own similes and metaphors.

Idioms

Many newspaper cartoonists would be out of business if there were no idioms. Hagar the Horrible sends Luckie Eddie to "draw the enemy's fire," for example; Eddie comes back with a drawing of their campfire. Students can learn idiomatic expressions by using them in their own cartoon creations and exchanging the finished products with one another. Here are a few starters: blow your top, kick the habit, give them a big hand, miss the boat.

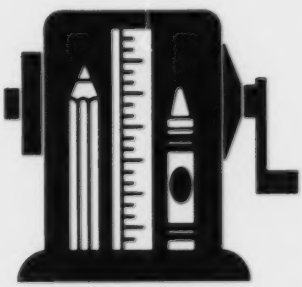
Literary allusions

Literary allusions are found in practically every issue of the newspaper. Even the characters in the "Peanuts" cartoon strip use them: Snoopy once told Woodstock, for example, that he should not lose his mitten or he wouldn't get any pie. Unfortunately, Woodstock didn't understand the allusion because he'd never heard or read "The Three Little Kittens." Snoopy walked away muttering, "Literary references are wasted on Woodstock."

Point out literary allusions to students and collect them for display on the classroom bulletin board. Demonstrate through these examples that books and stories are interrelated and that reading widely is important to complete understanding of texts.

Students Write

Once students have mastered or at least become familiar with many of the elements and techniques good writers use, they are ready to experiment with their own writing. These activities use the newspaper in inventive ways to show children different styles of and purposes for writing and give them a few ideas for creations of their own.



Timed writing

Timed writing is a nonthreatening way to get your students to put pencil to paper. Find interesting articles, comic strips, or pictures in the newspaper. Ask students to examine the material they have chosen, and then have them write about it for ten minutes without stopping. Students should be told that they don't have to worry about punctuation, spelling, or grammar. If they can't think what to write, they can simply restate the action depicted in the material until another idea comes to mind. This exercise will get students used to the physical process of writing and will start them on the road to creative thinking and expression.

Observing pictures

Help your students become better observers and at the same time better writers by asking them to concentrate on a picture in the newspaper and write about its details. The more closely the students look, the more they'll find. Create a contest to see who can find the most details. Soon the students will discover that their writing leads them into a story. Perhaps they could become the main character and tell the story from that vantage point. Much strong creative writing can emerge when students use pictures as a source of inspiration.

Paragraphs

Learning to write a good paragraph is not easy. Practice in asking themselves the five Ws (*who, what, when, where,* and *why*) might help young writers. First, challenge students to find answers to these five questions in the leads (beginnings) of news stories. After the students understand how this type of paragraph is constructed, list the five question words on the chalkboard. Students can think of an event they want to describe and use the five Ws to create an outline for that description. From these outlines, they can write their own

paragraphs. At first, encourage students to choose an event from their own experience—a family outing or a sports event, for example—and later have them invent things to describe.

Character sketches

Cartoonists exaggerate character traits—such as quiet, brash, bumbling, neat, foolish, and honest—for comic effect. Students can list the traits of characters selected from the comics and, using this list, can create detailed character sketches of cartoon characters. Once they are familiar with identifying characteristics and writing about them, students can write longer sketches of themselves or family members.

Obituaries

Writing obituaries gives older students a format to follow while practicing writing skills. Students can write obituaries of such things as the family's old car, their faded blue jeans, or a torn magazine. Ask students to include details of how their chosen inanimate subject "died" (a good opportunity for humor!) as well as a "character sketch" of the object.

Letters home

As students read the newspaper, ask them to pick an interesting article that describes the activities of a person they admire. Then ask them to pretend to be that person and write a letter home to their imaginary family, explaining what they are doing. Students will need to read the article carefully, both to determine the nature of the activity and to gain information on their selected person's background. Students can even write a short biography of the person they are pretending to be before beginning their letters so they become completely familiar with the personality they are adopting.

Letters to advertisers

Generally, about two-thirds of a daily newspaper is committed to advertising. Have students skim through the newspaper to find something they or their families have purchased with which they are particularly pleased. Then have them find the address of the company that made the product (this may require some library research and the librarian's help). Students can then list the reasons they like the product and, using this list as an outline, write letters of appreciation to the producer. Mail the letters and wait for the responses.

Advice column

Capitalize on students' natural desire to give advice by patterning an activity after newspaper advice columns. First, list and study with students all the different types of advice columns found in the newspaper: personal, medical, automobile, household, and so on. Note how the problems are presented. Then have the students write problems as they occur to them and slip them (anonymously) into a box. Once a week the teacher can look at the problems privately, removing any that are not appropriate for class discussion and assigning students who are interested in certain areas to write answers for the remainder. A rotating panel of students can review the problems each week and prepare an advice column for a class newspaper.

Dialogue

Most newspaper articles make excellent springboards for writing dialogue among people, animals, or even inanimate objects. Voice can be given to politicians, athletes, and favorite entertainers. For an article headlined "Elephant Hunting Continues in Kenya," students can write out a conversation among the elephants based on the information found in the article: "I hear we're targets for hunters and poachers," says Elephant

One. "Yeah, some of the farmers say we destroy their crops with our big feet," comments Elephant Two. "I think the poachers just want our tusks," growls Elephant Three. With this kind of writing exercise, students learn not only how to write creative dialogue but also how to use punctuation.

Cartoon drama

Cartoons are short dramatic episodes that can be used as the basis for children's plays. First, students can "perform" just the material in the comic strip. They can easily memorize their parts since there is often little dialogue to learn. Let them decide what part each person in their group will play and encourage them to say their parts with expression. As students gain experience in this medium and "get into" their characters they can invent a new dialogue and write a script that extends the scene.

Newspaper poetry

In every section of the newspaper there are sources of ideas for poems. Have students find powerful and picturesque words in articles. Write the children's selections on the chalkboard and use them to form the basis of a class haiku or senryu. (The classical haiku requires a word or theme that indicates a season of the year. The senryu follows the same 5-7-5 syllable pattern but does not require reference to a season.) When children are comfortable with writing in this regulated form, ask them to come up with their own poems.

Editing and Revising

Once students have become comfortable with writing in a variety of forms, it is time to introduce them to elements of revising and editing. Be careful not to do this too early; children shouldn't get the

idea that their work is not "right" and has to be corrected or rewritten. The purpose of editing and revising is, of course, to make writing better. Once children are excited about their writing, they will be eager to work on improving it.

Fleshing out writing

Often beginning writers are too economical in their writing, omitting important details or forgetting to include background information. Help make students aware of when they need to include detail by asking them to flesh out the information in newspaper headlines. "New Football TV Deal" gives readers only the bare bones; "The football league signed a new contract with the television network today because they wanted to make more money" tells readers what is really going on.

Next, move on to the synopses of major news articles that often appear on a newspaper's first or second page. Ask students to expand each synopsis based on their reading of the full article. Eventually students can go beyond the article and seek additional material on the topic through interviews, library visits and research, or their own experiences.

Cutting copy

Space requirements often require newspaper writers to drastically shorten their articles and stories. Good writers learn early which material to cut – that is, which details are less important or even irrelevant. Assign students the task of condensing a newspaper article. They can then compare their synopsis with the newspaper's (if one is provided). This activity will help younger students evaluate which details are the most important and will emphasize that good writing is succinct and stays on topic. For older students, this technique can help with précis or summary writing and with making study notes from lengthy reading assignments.

Reordering copy

The structure of a newspaper article has an impact on how interested readers will be in reading it. Putting certain key elements of an article at the beginning or end of the article also can change its meaning substantially. Have students cut a newspaper article apart by paragraphs and then reorder those paragraphs. They will soon see how the meaning has changed or how the material becomes more or less interesting. This is a good introduction to editing, and students will find that it's not as onerous to practice on a newspaper article as it is on their own writing.

Chapter
FOUR

Activities for Social Studies and Science

The goals of instruction in social studies and the sciences include helping students live successfully in a changing world, understand environmental problems, solve problems through critical and creative thinking, and develop individual abilities and interests. The daily newspaper is an excellent and virtually inexhaustible source of information about real-life problems and solutions.

The newspaper can be used in any number of ways to promote learning in the content areas. In general terms, students could be asked to write their own news stories about current events or scientific discoveries using who, what, when, where, why, and how questions, or they might like to try writing biographical sketches of world leaders or famous scientists. No matter what form they take, however, newspaper-based activities in the content areas should promote learning through the process of inquiry. These steps are essential:

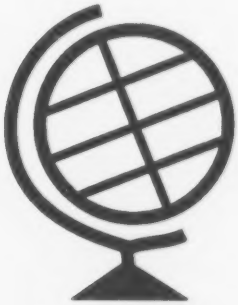
- Raise questions about material in the newspaper that relates to social studies or science.

- Have students identify the problems.
- Direct them in gathering data and investigating that data.
- Help students review the data and come to a conclusion.

Some specific suggestions for using the resources of the newspaper in science or social studies lessons follow.

Social Studies

These activities can be used to supplement various aspects of the social studies curriculum. Because of the broad nature of social studies (including history, geography, political science, and economics), only a few suggestions can be given here. It will be demonstrated, however, that the newspaper can be used to complement instruction in a variety of ways that will help bring social studies topics alive for students.



Historical newspapers

The material in today's newspapers probably will wind up in a different form in someone's history text some time in the future. Dramatize this concept by having students rewrite information

from their history books in newspaper style. Students can pretend to be reporters or staff writers working at the time of the historical period they are studying. Their writing can take any of the forms found in modern newspapers: a feature story headlined "Lincoln Assassinated"; a weather report titled "Vesuvius Rumbles—Eruption Possible"; an editorial about women's right to vote; or even advertising copy advising readers to trade in their horse and buggy for a brand new Model T. This is a good writing activity, and it will also help bring home the fact that history happened to real people, for whom those happenings were current events.

Cities

Practically every page of the daily newspaper contains the names of several cities. Young children can cut out these names and pin them to the appropriate places on a large map of the world. The city names can also be categorized under states, countries, or continents. Another option is to write the names on the chalkboard in scrambled order and ask the children to unscramble them and list them in alphabetical order. Activities like these help make children comfortable with print as well as familiarizing them with names of places around the world.

Sports geography

Help make geography interesting for students by linking it to professional sports. Ask students to write on a large map the names of teams beside the cities in which they play. Ask them what teams are located in certain geographic regions, such as near the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, or Great Lakes. What direction will a favorite team fly this weekend to get to its game? What areas will the teams fly over? Which game is farthest north, south, east, or west? How far will a favorite team have to travel? This activity can serve as an introduction to notions of direction, distance, time zones, and latitude and longitude.

Geography folders

Encourage older students to keep a folder or envelope of geographic data gleaned from the newspaper. They can collect stories about where certain events take place in the world and cut out various local, state, national, international, and statistical or demographic maps. When they have gathered sufficient information about a specific area, they can share it with the class. This can help make students aware of the vast differences in our world while at the same time putting geography in some sort of context.

Countries

Certain countries are in the news frequently. Have students select a country to read about in the daily newspaper for one week. Each day, students should clip out all the news and feature articles that appear about their country and keep these clippings in a folder. On Friday, ask students to report what they've learned about their country; perhaps its government policies, economic system, weather, or events that have taken place there. Encourage students to supplement the information from the newspaper with encyclopedia material for more detailed reports. This activity should help students get used to the idea that newspapers are an excellent source of information of all kinds.

Different cultures

The newspaper talks about people of different cultures from all over the world. Ask students to take a section of the newspaper and determine which articles focus on different cultures or people of various ethnic backgrounds. Have them keep track of what type of articles or editorials deal with cultures. Do this for a week to determine whether there is a pattern of reporting about any particular groups. Students will probably find that references to cultures and ethnicities permeate much of the newspaper. This activity can lead students to do more research

or conduct discussions about civil rights, domestic policies on immigration or education, and economic issues. Remember that early in their study, students will need to define terms such as culture, ethnicity, race, and citizenship.

Careers

Working in groups of two or three, ask students to find the ten most interesting or unusual careers mentioned or described in that day's newspaper. Ask students to rank the careers in order of their importance to the community and then explain why they ranked them as they did. Next, ask them to categorize the careers in different ways—the amount and kinds of education needed to perform that career, the ways in which that career helps others, and what personality traits they would need for that particular career.

Next, study the classified ads with the whole class. List on the chalkboard available jobs, the duties required, and the salaries paid. Students can make up other categories, including experience necessary, education required, and so on. Figure out the percentage of available jobs that require a high school diploma. Students will quickly see how useful an education is!

Personalities and VIPs

The daily newspaper is full of the famous and the not so famous. Have younger students cut out pictures of various newsmakers and paste them on cardboard. Underneath the pictures students can list the names of the personalities, the reasons they are in the news, and other pertinent information taken from newspaper articles. After several pictures have been collected, students can categorize the personalities and VIPs by occupation: politics, entertainment, or sports, for example.

Older students can keep folders on selected personalities, adding new material as it appears in the daily paper. These personalities may become the focus for studying careers, the sub-

jects for writing biographical sketches, or participants in make-believe interviews. Students in the upper-elementary grades can begin to develop critical reading skills by reading editorials and feature articles about selected personalities and evaluating what the newspaper is saying: What is the writer's opinion of this person? How do you know? Is this opinion justified? Why or why not?

Values

Personal choices in such things as language, clothes, food, vacations, and friends reflect individual, social, and cultural values. The newspaper is a mirror of many values. Discuss with students what they value and have them read through selected newspaper articles to determine whether their values are the same as those of the people in the newspaper. Particular attention can be paid to the editorial and opinion pages. Ask students to describe how their values compare with those they find in the paper. Then have them try to find expressions of certain values (such as courage, dependability, honesty, kindness, patriotism, and responsibility), or lack of these expressions in the articles they read.

Concepts

Concepts such as power, freedom, politics, institutions, justice, and conflict can be expressed and interpreted in many different ways. Understanding the various implications of such notions is crucial because they provide frameworks around which much knowledge is organized. After discussing the meanings of concepts such as these, ask students to find newspaper articles that discuss one or more of them in some way. Students can then share their findings with the class and talk about how concepts have different meanings in different situations.

Issues

The newspaper is full of issues: the death penalty, raising taxes, airline safety, wearing seatbelts, and so on. In order to help students learn about how to evaluate different sides of an issue, try a classroom debate. Students can read newspaper articles to learn the background of an issue and look at editorials to determine where the arguments lie. Next they should clarify their own positions and prepare presentations to state their opinions. This is also a good lesson in the power of persuasive writing and speaking since students can see whether their presentations convince their classmates.

Social problems

Have students identify some of the major social problems affecting their home town. They can collect background material by reading the local newspaper or interviewing people in their community. Then have the students write essays on the topics they have chosen, either describing the problem, arguing one side of an issue, or proposing a solution.

A certain problem can be selected for the students to focus on, particularly if it suits the curriculum. If, for example, you are teaching a unit on family, you can ask students to investigate the special needs and concerns of single-parent households or of senior citizens.

Government

The newspaper is a rich source of information about what goes on in government. Encourage students to collect articles about local, state or provincial, and national governments and use these to determine the responsibilities of various levels of government. Ask students to select one politician and track his or her activities for a week or two. This might involve plotting on a map or globe the travels of the U.S. president or recording the election campaigning of a provincial premier. Clip out, dis-

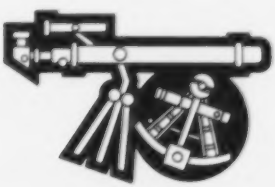
play, and discuss newspaper articles that show government in action – debating issues, enacting laws – and illustrate how those actions can affect citizens' everyday lives.

Rights and freedoms

The rights and freedoms guaranteed to most people who live in democracies simply do not exist in many places. Freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to a fair trial or to own property are taken for granted by many. Emphasize to students how important these rights and freedoms are by having them clip articles from the newspaper that describe places where such liberties do not exist. Next, ask students to clip articles about infringements on these rights and freedoms in the domestic arena, and note the responses to those infringements. This activity should help students learn just how important their rights and freedoms are in real life and teach them about their responsibilities as citizens in upholding them.

Science

Important scientific breakthroughs and science-based issues that affect all of us often are reported in the daily newspaper. Reading about them in this medium, rather than solely in science textbooks, should help students realize that far from being abstract and irrelevant, science is important in day-to-day life.



Weather

Many newspapers publish a map that shows the weather conditions in a very large area. From this map, students can learn to track storms, predict the kind of weather that might occur in various regions in the next few days, and learn general map-reading skills as well. Have students determine the weather conditions and temperatures in a variety of places, perhaps where friends and relatives live. This can supplement a science unit on weather or the seasons.

Pollution

Have students list various kinds of pollution: air, noise, toxic waste, acid rain, and water, for instance. Ask students to read newspaper articles about pollution and determine what, if anything, is being done to solve a particular pollution problem. On a chart, write the headings *Problems* and *Solutions*. Under each heading students can write about the problems and the solutions being offered to combat them. On another chart, list the ways pollution affects the average citizen. On classroom maps, indicate where pollution problems are the greatest in different regions of the world. Activities such as these will help students with classifying and problem-solving skills while making them aware of the huge environmental concerns we all must address.

Space

Encourage students to collect news items and stories about the exploration of space. Space scientists, physicists, and astronauts make excellent subjects for biographical writing and are often profiled in the newspaper. Have students read articles describing satellite launchings and determine how this technology affects them. Remember to teach the specialized vocabulary of space first!

Medical news

For older students, medical news from the newspaper is a good tool to teach classification. Collect newspapers for a week or two. Ask students to clip from the newspapers any items that deal with the topic of medicine or health. (Some newspapers have special weekly health pages or sections.) Have students classify the items they clip by topic—medical research, advances, technology—or by disease. Arrange the clippings on bulletin boards, in class scrapbooks, or in individual folders. Ask students to write reports on a health-related topic, using the newspaper clippings and library research to gather information.

Newspaper accounts about ways to prevent medical problems make excellent discussion materials for health lessons. They can also be used with older students as a springboard for discussing the manifestations of various medical conditions, and with students of any age to correct misconceptions and dispel potential prejudices.

Chapter
FIVE

Teaching Mathematics with the Newspaper

At first glance, the newspaper seems to contain little relating to mathematics; a second look, however, makes one realize how much of the language of mathematics is used in daily life. Just looking back on the previous sentence gives an indication of the prevalence of mathematical expressions: the words *first, little, second,* and *how much* appear in just that short space, and all of those words have mathematical associations.

Ask students to select a page from the local daily newspaper and list all of the mathematical concepts they find, beginning with the page and section number and including words with relevance to mathematics, such as penny, telephone number, reduce, five minutes, 2:30 p.m., $200, school year, golfing fees, census figures, and fax numbers. The newspaper also relies on expressing mathematical concepts with figures, charts, formulae, geometrical shapes, graphs, tables, and symbols.

Just a quick glance through the daily newspaper should begin to convince students that knowing about mathema-

tics can help in the real world. Here are a few activities to reinforce that idea and bring the message home.

Quantity

By using the daily newspaper, you can teach the concept of quantity in a variety of ways. Instruct students to circle sets of items in newspaper photographs: cars, people, or animals, for example. Then ask them to count the number of each item in that particular set. Show students two different photographs containing similar items. Ask them to list, count, and compare the items in the selected categories.

Later the categories can be changed to reflect mathematical concepts: cut numbers and number words from the newspaper and have students place them in categories such as fractions, money amounts, units of time, and cardinal and ordinal numbers. Students can also be asked to find the headline that contains the most words or letters or to circle instances of quantities of tens, hundreds, thousands, and millions in selected articles.

Numbers

The newspaper is an excellent tool for showing students the importance of numbers and helping them develop a sense of numerical sequence. Have students circle all the instances of numbers in a given article or newspaper page. Show them the differences between cardinal numbers and ordinals and have them put the numbers they found in sequence. Point out how often numbers that appear in the newspaper denote amounts of money. When children become familiar with numbers, they can make note of the way they are used – to number the newspaper's pages, to indicate weight or height, to give the value of world currency, to predict the day's temperature, to tell what time an event occurred; and so on.

Comparing

Educated consumers know how to compare prices. The newspaper has many advertisements that can form the basis for comparisons. Ask students to find two supermarket advertisements and list and compare the prices for specific quantities of meats, vegetables, grain, and dairy products. This can serve as an introduction to the mathematical notions of less and more. Being aware of the prices of clothes, cars, tires, and other items will help students understand the concept of the cost of living and the importance of shopping wisely.

In addition, students can be introduced to various consumer columns and publications that offer quality and cost comparisons. They can compare job salaries and hourly wages listed in the want ads for jobs requiring little education, a high school diploma, and a college degree.

Adding and subtracting

The newspaper provides many opportunities for practice in adding and subtracting. Ask students to skim through newspaper advertisements to make a "wish list" of things they would like to have. Ask them to add the costs of the items. Next, have the students determine which three or four items on their lists they want least and subtract their cost from the total. This should help put the abstract notions of addition and subtraction into concrete terms for young students.

Older students can use the newspaper to compute the difference between the local high and low temperatures for a particular day, the running time of two movies, or the cost of front row theater tickets as opposed to balcony seats. Students can also list favorite foods and determine the total cost of a meal made up of those foods.

Averages

The newspaper has many practical applications for teaching

the concept of averaging. Let each student select five homes, townhouses, or condominiums from the real estate listings and determine the average price. If births are listed in your newspaper, have students keep track of the number of babies born each day for a month. Determine which day averaged the most births. The weather news can provide information for determining average temperatures or rainfall in a region, city, or town.

Sports mathematics

Many students are sports fans and will be motivated to learn facts and figures related to sports. By following sports, students learn the utility of numbers in measuring and predicting success. In basketball, figures commonly discussed include the number of points earned by each team member, the percentage of times a player makes attempted foul shots, the players' heights, and the salaries paid to professional players; in football, observers calculate points for touchdowns and field goals, the average weight of the defensive line, and the distance a team has to travel to play a game. Baseball is a game full of statistics. Ask students to calculate batting averages, earned run averages, slugging percentages, and the number of strikeouts, walks, and balks in a game. Golf and tennis have their own numbers. This sort of exercise will help students realize that mathematical concepts have relevance to things they care about.

Travel math

Another activity could be based on the travel section of the newspaper. Students could compute the cost of a week-long vacation to various spots in the world. The cost of food, lodging, entertainment, gas (if traveling by car)—or train, bus, or airfare—and miscellaneous expenses such as taxi travel to and from the airport and tips should be tallied. Students can then compute the average cost per day for their vacation. Compare the various costs of tour packages to make students aware of the

different types of travel available at a range of prices. This activity can be used to combine a lesson on math with one on geography.

Problem solving

Problem solving in mathematics is generally more difficult for students than basic computation. The newspaper is full of ideas for creating real problems to solve. Have students look in the classified section to find information on the per-word cost of placing an ad. Students can then write their own ads and determine how much it would cost to run it once, twice, or for a week. Students can scan the advertisements for clothing and determine how much it would cost to replace every item of clothing they are wearing. What would be the lowest price? The highest?

You can also look for stories that talk about budgets or fines and help students work out problems based on the information given. How much is a particular school district spending per student enrolled? How long would a person have to work at a certain hourly rate to pay off a $1,000 fine? Students often find such math problems easier to solve when they are based on real life situations.

Groceries

Help make your students into smart consumers. Ask them to bring in the cash register receipts from their family's recent trips to the supermarket. With these in hand, students can read through newspaper food advertisements and observe if the same items were available for less money at other stores. Then they can calculate the amount of money their family would have saved or lost by shopping at another store. Once they have determined the best place to shop, they can calculate the savings they would accrue by shopping there for six months or a year. Older students could factor in the cost of driving from home to

the various markets, based on the average cost of gasoline, the miles or kilometers their family car gets to the gallon or litre, and the distance to the various stores.

Dream house

Ask students to figure out the cost of owning their dream house. A study of the real estate section of the newspaper will give them information on the cost of a piece of land, the price of a home, and the terms of a mortgage. Older students can determine the amount of interest on a 20- or 30-year mortgage and how much the monthly payments will be. Selecting the furniture for a home and adding up the cost can be done by examining advertisements. Discuss what appliances may be needed and calculate the price of such items as a television set, stove, washer, and dryer. Figuring out the monthly cost of utilities will give students another perspective on home ownership. Encourage students to do part of this study with their parents.

Television

Ask students to skim through the newspaper television guide and note the programs they watched the previous day. Ask them to list the programs along with their lengths in minutes. Then have them add these figures and divide by 60 to determine the number of hours they watched TV. Have students keep track of their TV watching in this way for a week. After they calculate their weekly viewing time, have students project the average number of days per year they spend in front of the television. Then try to encourage them to spend at least some of that time reading instead!

Tables and schedules

Tables and schedules permeate the newspaper. Advertisements list items and their prices; the movie section provides

schedules; television listings include channels, times, and programs; the sports pages list batting averages and football scores; and the business section lists stock market quotations. Help students become aware of the ways numerical concepts can be expressed in tables and schedules by dividing the class in groups to discuss how a reader gains information from such lists. Each group can look at one table or schedule or at several examples of the same type and then explain to the rest of the class how they can be read.

Graphs

Graphs put large amounts of information into a visual and easily comprehensible form. After teaching an introductory lesson on graphs and graphing, you can have students make their own with grid paper and the newspaper comics. On the grid, students number from 1 to 30 vertically on the left side; across the bottom, students write the names of the cartoons. Then they can graph the number of words in each cartoon strip in bar graph form. Graphs can also be created for the number of pages in each section of the paper, the number of words in headlines, daily temperatures for a week, and the number of people pictured in each section. Older students can link graphing to studies in other content areas. They could, for example, graph the number of times a particular political figure gets his or her name in the newspaper or the frequency of stories about pollution in a certain area.

These and other activities can help students hone their math skills while teaching them to read critically. As with any instruction, teachers should use discretion in choosing or adapting classroom activities to meet their students' particular needs. In the hands of discerning teachers, the newspaper can be an excellent tool to further students' understanding of society, as well as their scholastic abilities in a wide range of disciplines.